

# SENATE RECORD VOTE ANALYSIS

104th Congress

1st Session

Vote No. 316

July 20, 1995, 7:00 p.m.

Page S-10400 Temp. Record

## LEGISLATIVE APPROPRIATIONS/Restore Funding for the OTA

**SUBJECT:** Legislative Branch Appropriations Bill for fiscal year 1995 . . . H.R. 1854. Mack motion to table the Hollings amendment No. 1808.

### ACTION: MOTION TO TABLE AGREED TO, 54-45

**SYNOPSIS:** As reported, H.R. 1854, the Legislative Branch Appropriations Bill for fiscal year 1995, will appropriate \$2.19 billion, which is \$200.4 million (8.4 percent) less than was appropriated in fiscal year (FY) 1995, and which is 16 percent less than the President's request. The Office of Technology Assessment (OTA) will be abolished, the General Accounting Office will be cut by 25 percent over 2 years, and Senate committee funding will be reduced by 15 percent.

**The Hollings amendment** would appropriate \$15 million for the Office of Technology Assessment (OTA). (The FY 1995 appropriation was \$22 million; President Clinton requested \$23.2 million; the Senate bill will appropriate \$3.6 million plus will use \$2.6 million in FY 1995 funds to terminate the OTA.) The cost of the amendment would be offset by reducing appropriations for certain accounts under the Architect of the Capitol and the Government Printing Office (GPO). The amendment would also direct the Librarian of Congress to recommend to Congress within 120 days on how to consolidate the duties and functions of the OTA, the General Accounting Office (GAO), and the GPO.

Debate was limited by unanimous consent. Following debate, Senator Mack moved to table the Hollings amendment. Generally, those favoring the motion to table opposed the amendment; those opposing the motion to table favored the amendment.

**Those favoring** the motion to table contended:

The OTA is nice to have but it is an expensive luxury that Congress cannot afford. Last year the OTA produced 50 reports. With a \$22 million appropriation, that comes to \$400,000 a report. In contrast, the Congressional Research Service (CRS) produced some 11,000 reports and the General Accounting Office produced many hundreds of reports. Congress created the OTA in 1972 with the idea of having a small cadre of experts to gather scientific and technical data for Members. Over the years, the OTA has bloated up

(See other side)

YEAS (54)			NAYS (45)			NOT VOTING (1)	
Republicans (44 or 81%)		Democrats (10 or 22%)	Republicans (10 or 19%)		Democrats (35 or 78%)	Republicans (0)	Democrats (1)
Abraham	Hutchison	Baucus	Bond	Akaka	Kennedy		Inouye- <sup>2</sup>
Ashcroft	Inhofe	Bryan	Campbell	Biden	Kerrey		
Bennett	Kassebaum	Dorgan	Cohen	Bingaman	Kerry		
Brown	Kempthorne	Exon	Grassley	Boxer	Kohl		
Burns	Kyl	Feingold	Hatch	Bradley	Lautenberg		
Chafee	Lott	Graham	Jeffords	Breaux	Leahy		
Coats	Lugar	Harkin	Murkowski	Bumpers	Levin		
Cochran	Mack	Moseley-Braun	Simpson	Byrd	Lieberman		
Coverdell	McCain	Nunn	Snowe	Conrad	Mikulski		
Craig	McConnell	Reid	Stevens	Daschle	Moynihan		
D'Amato	Nickles			Dodd	Murray		
DeWine	Packwood			Feinstein	Pell		
Dole	Pressler			Ford	Pryor		
Domenici	Roth			Glenn	Robb		
Faircloth	Santorum			Heflin	Rockefeller		
Frist	Shelby			Hollings	Sarbanes		
Gorton	Smith			Johnston	Simon		
Gramm	Specter				Wellstone		
Grams	Thomas						
Gregg	Thompson						
Hatfield	Thurmond						
Helms	Warner						

#### EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE:

- 1—Official Business
- 2—Necessarily Absent
- 3—Illness
- 4—Other

#### SYMBOLS:

- AY—Announced Yea
- AN—Announced Nay
- PY—Paired Yea
- PN—Paired Nay

to 203 employees. In contrast, the Administration's science advisor has a budget of less than \$5 million and only 39 employees.

The answer, though, is not merely to cut back on the OTA; it is to eliminate it. Since the creation of the OTA, the Library of Congress has built an impressive capacity to deal with technology issues. Additionally, the General Accounting Office (GAO) is not comprised entirely of auditors; it also has scientific experts and regularly examines technological issues. The GAO, like the OTA, is perfectly capable of consulting with outside experts and with forming panels to examine science issues and to receive advice. In short, the OTA is a totally redundant agency.

The appropriators were given the task of coming up with \$200 million in savings on this bill. That task was not easy. They certainly would have preferred to keep the nice frill of paying the OTA for advice, but the choice was between cutting this program or cutting more worthwhile programs. An easier route they could have taken, which is advanced by the Hollings amendment, would have been to make smaller cuts in several programs. In fairness, the Hollings amendment would not simply make an across-the-board cut in every function in the bill; a few areas are identified as being of lower priority and are cut by between 1 and 2 percent. Cutting 1 or 2 percent seems much easier to bear, but with the slow, steady cuts that have been made over the past few years these reductions add up. This easier course is a poor policy choice. Congress should have the courage to kill bad programs instead of just indiscriminately and gradually choking all programs, good or bad.

An unfortunate maxim is that once an agency or program is created it is nearly impossible to destroy. The country can go 200 years without a program, create it, fund it for 1 or 2 years, and then, no matter how poorly it operates, it will have ardent defenders ready to explain why the free world hinges on its continuation. Every program creates its own constituency. We urge our colleagues not to fall into this trap. The OTA is useful, but not necessary, and it is an unaffordable luxury in these difficult budgetary times. We therefore urge the rejection of the Hollings amendment.

**Those opposing the motion to table contended:**

The Hollings amendment would cut the OTA by 30 percent instead of eliminating it. We are totally opposed to eliminating the OTA because it performs a valuable and needed function for Congress that cannot be duplicated by any other congressional or executive branch agency. However, we can support the 30 percent cut because we think a consolidation of the OTA with other agencies would result in savings without hurting the quality of its services.

Cutting the OTA would be penny-wise and pound-foolish. On numerous occasions its timely reports have prevented Congress from unnecessarily spending money. Most notably, it refuted the common perception that \$80 billion would be needed to do the work of the Synthetic Fuel Corporation. Its testimony convinced Congress to spend only \$20 billion, thereby saving the American taxpayers \$60 billion. Every year, the advice from this small agency results in savings that far exceed its cost.

Senators who suggest that the GAO could do the work of the OTA are wrong. The GAO is comprised primarily of auditors and accountants. Only 4 percent of the GAO staff of 5,407 have PH.D's, and few of those doctorates are in science and engineering. In contrast, 58 percent of the OTA's staff hold PH.D's in science and engineering. The GAO itself frequently relies on OTA expertise. Additionally, the OTA staff are closely connected with leading researchers in academia and industry. They can draw on an incredible network of expertise, for free, to provide the best technological information possible to Congress.

Perhaps the greatest indication of the scientific value of the OTA can be seen in its endorsements. The National Academy of Science, the National Academy of Engineering, and the Institute of Medicine have warned that closing the OTA will diminish the quality of advice to Congress. The 240,000-member Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers called the OTA an "irreplaceable asset." The world's largest scientific organization, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, stated that abolishing the OTA would seriously harm the national interest. We hope our colleagues will listen to this advice by the world's leading scientists on the value of the OTA's advice, and will join us in opposing the motion to table the Hollings amendment.